

them a notice, do not intend to send them a notice that we are on the way out by a certain date.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I yield 10 minutes to the Senator from Massachusetts.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized for 10 minutes.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I intend to support the Levin-Reed amendment, and I also intend to support the Kerry amendment.

Both amendments make clear that Democrats are united in our belief that it is time to shift to the Iraqis the responsibility for their own future and to begin to withdraw our troops from Iraq. It is wrong for the Republican-controlled Congress to be a rubber-stamp for the President's failed policy. We cannot ignore our responsibility to our men and women in uniform.

America was wrong to go to war in Iraq in the way we did, when we did, and for the false reasons we were given. There was no immediate threat. There was no persuasive link to al-Qaida. Saddam Hussein was not close to acquiring a nuclear weapon.

But as my brother Robert Kennedy said in 1968:

Past error is no excuse for its own perpetuation.

Mindless determination and foolish consistency don't make a better outcome likely. With each passing day, the American people are growing more and more impatient with the war in Iraq.

They want a policy worthy of the sacrifice of our men and women in uniform, not sloganeering and accusations of "cut and run." The American people don't want our troops deployed in Iraq indefinitely, defending the same flawed strategy. Staying the course is not an acceptable strategy when the course is a failed course.

Our military forces have now been deployed in Iraq for 39 months, more than 3 years. That's longer than the 37 months of combat in the Korean war. By the end of this year, it will be longer than it took to fight and win World War II.

The American people want a realistic strategy for our troops to be redeployed out of Iraq, and this amendment provides it. It sends clear message: now that a democratic government has been elected by the Iraqi people, it is time for American troops to begin to come home.

We need to view disengagement as part of the solution in Iraq. Our overwhelming military presence and our open-ended military commitment have only fueled the insurgency, made America a crutch for the Iraqi Government, made our country more hated in the world, and made the war on terrorism harder to win.

The best hope for the success of the new Iraqi Government to succeed is for

us to begin disengaging from Iraq, and they from us. The Iraqi Government must begin to make its own decisions, make necessary compromises to avoid full-scale civil war, and take responsibility for its own future.

As Iraq's National Security Adviser wrote in the Washington Post yesterday: "Iraq has to grow out of the shadow of the United States and the coalition, take responsibility for its own decisions, learn from its own mistakes, and find Iraqi solutions to Iraqi problems."

Iraq has had elections, a permanent government has been established, more than 200,000 members of Iraqi security forces have been trained, and it is time to begin bringing Americans home. The Levin amendment and the Kerry amendment can help us achieve that goal and prevent our troops from being caught in an endless quagmire.

The cost of this war in blood and treasure has been far too great. More than \$320 billion has already been spent, with no end in sight. A recent estimate by Nobel Prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz suggests the total cost will exceed \$1 trillion.

Our military is stretched to the breaking point. Many soldiers have been deployed more than three times to Iraq.

More than 2,500 American lives have been lost, including more than 50 sons of Massachusetts. More than 18,000 of our troops have been wounded. Clearly, despite the death of Zarqawi, al-Qaida terrorists and insurgents remain determined to kill American soldiers.

Despite what Vice President CHENEY says about the insurgency being in its last throes, the insurgency rages on. Last month, 68 American soldiers were killed in Iraq. Insurgents attacked American soldiers 90 times a day.

We always knew that deposing Saddam Hussein would be easy, but the administration should have foreseen that winning the peace would be difficult. Unfortunately, for our men and women in uniform, the arrogance of the administration blinded it to the cold, hard realities that our troops would face every day in Iraq.

Alarm bells had been ringing, but the Bush administration ignored them.

As General Hoar, former head of the Central Command, warned before the war, in September 2002, winning the peace would be bloody. He said: "In urban warfare . . . It looks like the last 15 minutes of Saving Private Ryan."

General John M. Shalikashvili, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, warned, before the war, in September of 2002: "I think if it gets to urban warfare, and the likelihood is certainly great that it could . . . it could get very messy. The collateral damage could be very great, and our own casualties could increase significantly."

In fact, in their 1997 book, *A World Transformed* the first President Bush and his National Security Adviser

Brent Scowcroft explained why they didn't go on to Baghdad in the first Gulf war. They wrote that it: "would have incurred incalculable human and political costs . . . We would have been forced to occupy Baghdad and, in effect, rule Iraq. The coalition would instantly have collapsed, the Arabs deserting it in anger and other allies pulling out as well. Under those circumstances, there was no viable exit strategy we could see. . . . Had we gone the invasion route, the United States could conceivably still be an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land."

Those words eerily describe what happened when the current President Bush ignored that wise advice and invaded Iraq.

We must not forget that ultimately this is a debate about real people who are risking their lives every day. With this amendment and the Kerry amendment, we provide a realistic way out of the quagmire in Iraq, and I urge my colleagues to support both.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I yield 5 minutes to the Senator from South Carolina.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, this is a very important debate. There is a lot of interest in this debate throughout the world. I am sure everybody at home is probably not sitting on the edge of their seats listening to what I am saying, but in many ways this debate will define the U.S. relationship with the Middle East and the world at large for a long time.

The authors of this amendment are as patriotic as anyone I have ever met. They are fine Senators. They are smart. They are trying to do what they believe is in the best interest of the country and the world at large. The problem I have with the amendment and the reason I rise in opposition to it is that there is an underlying premise about this amendment that we need to set timetables to send a signal to the Iraqi people to do their part and to get on with the transition and to stand up faster and to get political solutions to hard problems faster so that we can come home, and without this amendment, the Iraqi people may just draw this thing out and rely on us too much.

I understand your concern, but I take a different view of the Iraqi people. I am here today publicly to say that I could not be more proud of standing with the Iraqi people and their Government than I am now. What we have asked of them, they have delivered. Senator DODD was right. Every time we tried to set deadlines, they delivered. They delivered on some of the most difficult circumstances imaginable. If you want to run for office in Iraq—it is tough in America; they say awful, bad things about us in this body when we run—they try to kill you, and they come after your family. So to those